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Foreign Crops and MARKETS

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ARGENTINA ANNOUNCES 1943-44 GRAIN STANDARDS

The Argentine Government has established official standards for all small grains of the 1943-44 crops, based on samples of the harvested grains. Three grades have been set up for wheat and two grades for oats, barley, and rye. Exports are to be made on the basis of the official standards rather than on F.A.Q. terms and arbitration, as was the former practice.

ARGENTINE COMMERCIAL WHEAT STOCKS

Commercial stocks of wheat in Argentina were placed at 296,749,000 bushels on April 1. Of that amount 163,361,000 bushels were reported held by country dealers and 101,458,000 bushels were in the hands of exporters.

CANADA RESTRICTS BARLEY EXPORTS

The Canadian Wheat Board is restricting exports of barley to the United States to small lots of malting quality that can be moved directly by rail from the Prairie Provinces. No exports permits are being issued for barley of any type from the Lakehead.

MEXICAN WEST COAST VEGETABLE SHIPMENTS

Carlot shipments of Mexican West Coast vegetables through the Mexican-United States border port of Nogales, from the beginning of the current season up to April 15, 1944, inclusive, were as follows, corresponding figures for the 1942-43 season being shown in parentheses: tomatoes, 4,973 (6,049); green peas, 812 (724); green peppers, 277 (278); mixed vegetables, 43 (149); and total, 6,105 (7,200). Many of the leading importers of Mexican tomatoes advised their agents to stop shipments on April 15, 1944, because of heavy shipments from Florida and expected arrivals from Texas. Shipments of green peas have practically ended for the season, and those of peppers were expected to decline rapidly after April 15.

SOVIET PRESS CONTINUES SPRING SOWING DRIVES

Editorials and articles aimed at stimulating all-out effort in the spring sowing program continued to be given prominent space in the Soviet press during the past 2 weeks. Especial emphasis was placed on the importance of attaining maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the use of agricultural machinery. The Government itself announced measures to stimulate greater effort, such as premiums for outstanding work in tractor repair stations, for exceptional performance of tractors and other machines in the field, and for the fulfillment and overfulfillment of deliveries to the State.

GRAIN AND GRAIN PRODUCTS . . .

Gordon P. Boals, in charge

INDIAN WHEAT CROP REPORTED LARGE

The wheat crop now being harvested in India is placed at 386,624,000 bushels, according to the first official estimate. At that figure the production would be one of the largest reported, though it is smaller than earlier trade forecasts indicated. It is also somewhat below last year's record production of 409,584,000 bushels. The relatively good outturn this year may be attributed to yields slightly above-average, since the acreage reported is around the average of recent years.

The third official estimate of the wheat acreage is reported at 33,611,000 acres. Of that total the leading wheat region, the Punjab, accounts for around 11,000,000 acres. The corresponding estimate for all India last year has been revised to 34,091,000 acres, which is still slightly below the final figure. On the basis of present estimates, this year's yield would be 11.5 bushels per acre. This is slightly above the average for the past 5 years and somewhat larger than the average for the 5 years preceding that.

INDIA: Wheat acreage, yield per acre, production, trade and apparent utilization, 1934-1944

YEAR OF HARVEST	ACREAGE	AVERAGE YIELD PER ACRE	PRODUCTION	IMPORTS a/	EXPORTS a/	APPARENT DOMESTIC UTILIZATION
	1,000 acres	*Bushels*	*1,000 bushels*	*1,000 bushels*	*1,000 bushels*	*1,000 bushels*
1934	36,077	9.7	349,813	286	1,014	349,085
1935	34,490	10.5	363,216	507	1,285	362,438
1936	33,639	10.5	352,203	60	9,858	342,405
1937	33,215	11.0	364,075	818	20,366	344,527
1938	35,640	11.3	401,856	5,946	13,551	394,251
Average ..	34,612	10.6	366,233	1,523	9,215	358,541
1939	35,441	10.5	371,952	b/ 2,318	b/ 2,522	-
1940	34,009	11.8	401,968	-	-	-
1941	34,849	10.7	374,341	-	-	-
1942	34,039	11.0	374,715	-	-	-
1943	34,298	11.9	409,584	-	-	-
Average ..	34,527	11.2	386,512	-	-	-
1944	33,611	11.5	c/ 386,624	-	-	-

From official sources.

a/ Sea-borne trade only, for the marketing year April-March following harvest. Includes flour as grain. b/ April-January only. c/ First estimate - corresponding estimate of 1943 has been revised to 408,613,000.

Weather conditions were variable during the season, with seeding taking place under rather unfavorable circumstances, according to reports. During the greater part of the growing season conditions favored the crop in most parts of the country though there were some complaints of insufficient rainfall in some important areas. Heavy rains in mid-April, however, were reported to have caused some damage to the crop at harvesttime and reduced prospects somewhat.

Wheat is seeded from October to December in the principal wheat areas, and the harvest extends from March to May. India's crop-reporting schedule provides for five regular forecasts of wheat acreage, with the first issued in January and the last in August. The earlier figures are based on incomplete reports and, as each successive estimate includes fuller returns, it is generally found that the acreage estimates increase progressively. The first of the three production estimates is scheduled for April, and the final estimate is issued with the final acreage figure, in August.

INDIA: Successive estimates for wheat acreage and production, average 1935-1939, annual 1940-1944

YEAR	DATE OF ESTIMATE				
	JANUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	AUGUST
	1,000 acres	*1,000 acres*	*1,000 acres*	*1,000 acres*	*1,000 acres*
ACREAGE					
Average 1935-1939	32.432	32,905	33.585	34,262	34.485
1940	32.526	33,189	33.465	33,673	34.009
1941	32,811	33.364	34,110	34,562	34,849
1942	32,106	32,349	33.556	33.914	34,039
1943	33.709	34.324	34,091	34,057	34,298
1944	32,361	33,275	33,611	-	-
PRODUCTION a/			*1,000 bushels*	*1,000 bushels*	*1,000 bushels*
Average 1935-1939	-	-	369.309	368,204	370.660
1940	-	-	391,589	397,264	401,968
1941	-	-	383,227	370.608	374.341
1942	-	-	370.309	372,960	374,715
1943	-	-	408.613	408,352	409,584
1944	-	-	386,624	-	-

From official sources.

a/ The first estimate of production is issued in April.

Food shortage developed in India in 1942 and continued into 1943, largely as the result of transportation difficulties and loss of the usual imports of rice from Burma, averaging around 1.5 million tons. Supplying the urban populations has constituted the greatest problem, and the responsibility for these areas has been assumed temporarily by the Central Government. In order to control existing supplies, rationing became necessary in some parts and is reported to be in force in more than 130 towns, including more than 25 million people.

Price restrictions were removed in January 1943, in an effort to bring more grain into regular marketing channels. Prices increased steadily immediately following that move, until they reached a peak in July with the wheat index reported at 346, based on August 19, 1939 prices. Prices vary considerably in the different regions of the country, but no stabilization measures were contemplated for the immediate future, at last report.

INDIA REPORTS LARGE RICE CROP

A rice crop larger than any in two decades was harvested in India during the 1943-44 season, according to the rice forecast published in the Indian Trade Journal of March 30, 1944. The estimate of 2,287 million bushels represents a tremendous increase over last year's revised production figure of 1,861 million bushels. Gains were reported in all Provinces except Bombay, Hyderabad, the Central Provinces and Berar. The largest increase is in Bengal where the crop is reported to be 44 percent above the 5-year average, 1936-37 to 1040-41, and 70 percent larger than the small harvest of 1942/43. The famine during 1943, most critical in the heavily populated districts of Bengal, could not be relieved by imports normally obtained from Burma, and transportation was undeveloped to carry rice from the surplus Provinces to the deficit areas.

Prices vary in the Provinces in response to different conditions. During 1943 in the rice-surplus Provinces they were maintained at reasonable levels, and in some deficit areas were kept from rising through price-control measures. In Bengal, however, they soared to unprecedented levels. The highest price reported was $16.34 per 100 pounds, whereas the average price during January-June, 1939, was $1.70 per 100 pounds.

The reported production this season should far exceed India's rice consumption requirements in 1944. All India will have sufficient rice, however, only if it is more evenly divided through some form of government procurement and distribution.

INDIA: Rice acreage, production, and yield, by Provinces and States, 1942-43 and 1943-44 a/

PROVINCE OR STATE	1942-43 ACREAGE	1942-43 PRODUCTION	1942-43 YIELD PER ACRE	1943-44 ACREAGE	1943-44 PRODUCTION	1943-44 YIELD PER ACRE
	1,000 acres	*1,000 bushels*	*Bushels*	*1,000 acres*	*1,000 bushels*	*Bushels*
Bengal	23,142	516.909	22.3	26,550	880,598	33.2
Madras	10,394	341.940	32.9	10,731	371,089	34.6
Bihar	9,275	243,058	26.2	9,970	252,027	25.3
Central Provinces and Berar	7,617	177,734	23.3	7,657	177,211	23.1
United Provinces ...	7,094	138,869	19.6	7,112	139,915	19.7
Assam	5,083	121,230	23.9	5,226	157,255	30.1
Orissa	5,055	93,202	18.4	5,112	100,826	19.7
Bombay	2,628	86,326	32.8	2,627	81,841	31.2
Sind	1,322	24,216	18.3	1,387	37,669	27.2
Punjab	1,097	28,701	26.2	1,258	31,840	25.3
Coorg	88	4,484	51.0	88	5,157	58.6
Hyderabad	1,095	35,352	32.3	1,103	26,533	24.1
Mysore	754	17,265	22.9	802	19,059	23.8
Boroda	241	3,887	16.1	304	5,830	19.2
Bhopal	34	448	13.2	33	448	13.6
Total	b/ 74,919	b/ 1,833,620	24.5	79,960	2,287,299	28.6

Indian Trade Journal. a/ Preliminary estimates. b/ Total acreage and production for 1942-43 were revised to 75,193,000 acres and 1,860,752,000 bushels.

A. W. Palmer, in charge

COTTON CROP IN GUATEMALA INCREASES SLIGHTLY

The cotton crop just harvested in Guatemala is estimated at the equivalent of 4,100 bales of 478 pounds, compared with 4,000 bales in 1941-42 and 3,300 bales in 1940-41. Cotton production in this country has always been difficult because of the large number of insects. Locusts have been a serious obstacle. The supply of cotton has never been adequate for the domestic needs, and the Government has been working on a program of pest control in order to increase domestic cotton supplies.

The steady increase in production from year to year testifies to the success of the Government in its program. From a negligible crop of 50 bales in the 1934-35 season, production increased to 4,100 bales in the past season. An increase is recorded in each successive season except in 1940-41, when excessive rains occurred just before and after maturity of the crop.

Consumption has increased in Guatemala during recent years, and, in spite of larger crops, imports have about doubled since 1939. Other than the United States, the principal sources of imported cotton are Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Peru. Probably about 95 percent of the supply of raw cotton is consumed in the textile mills of the country, and the remainder is used principally in matresses and home weaving.

GUATEMALA: Cotton production, 1934-35 to 1942-43
(Bales of 478 pounds)

YEAR	PRODUCTION	YEAR	PRODUCTION	YEAR	PRODUCTION
	Bales		*Bales*		*Bales*
1934-35	50	1937-38	1,400	1940-41	3,300
1935-36	500	1938-39	2,800	1941-42	4,000
1936-37	700	1939-40	3,500	1942-43	4,100

Compiled from consular reports.

RAMIE PRODUCTION IN SÃO PAULO

This year's production of ramie in São Paulo is expected to amount to only a little more than 1,750,000 pounds of green fiber, or not more than 10 percent of what the crop would be if all the area planted to ramie were to be harvested. Although a perennial, ramie need not be cut every season. Farmers in São Paulo often neglect it if prices or labor conditions are not favorable. Between 21,000 and 27,000 acres are now planted to ramie, mostly in the western part of the state. About 45 percent of the area is centered in Alta Paulista and 30 percent in Noroeste. Two other important areas are the Sorocabana and Lower Paulista.

Annual yield per acre varies between 740 and 1,840 pounds, including all cuttings. Ramie is usually cut three times annually after the first year. The seasons in São Paulo last about 20 days each, and occur in September, December, and March. The last cutting is the heaviest, because it falls in the season of greatest warmth and humidity when the plants grow fastest. The principal variety grown is the Boehmeria nivea.

Ramie fiber is being used as a substitute for jute in the manufacture of burlap and bags. Brazilian processors are now required to use at least 60 percent domestic fibers in the manufacture of jute yarns, in accordance with a decree about the first of last March raising the percentage from 40 percent, in order to conserve the decreasing supply of Indian jute. Ramie is suitable for mixture with jute and would be used in much larger quantities if it were possible to overcome the difficulty of processing and degumming.

Cutting is done with hand sickles in São Paulo, but the separation of the fiber from the stalk must be done by machinery because of a scarcity of cheap labor. No satisfactory mower is available. The best processing machine for green fiber can handle only about 1,700 to 1,800 pounds per day. At this rate, a farmer with one machine can handle less than 10 acres of ramie during the 20 days of one cutting period. One of these machines costs about $700, a price too great for the small grower.

A machine for handling dry stalks can process about 650 pounds of them per day. The working period is not limited to the cutting season, because the dry material will stay in good condition for a long time. The disadvantages of the dry-stalk method of fiber separation are the comparatively low yield and a quality which is unsatisfactory for industrial use.

Degumming is difficult, and fiber which has not been completely cleaned is not satisfactory when used in bagging. The residue of vegetable gum is subject to fermentation when the bags are stored in a damp place, with consequent weakening of the container and damage to the contents.

The quality of ramie varies greatly. Part of the variation is due to the use of different kinds of machines for processing, and part of it results from the absence of any official grading system. The five grades set up for bast fibers do not apply to ramie. All commercial fiber is bought from sample. Production of ramie in commercial quantities was begun in São Paulo about 1935, but the greatest increase in production has been in recent years since the war has brought about difficulties in obtaining jute from India. The Government of the State has encouraged ramie production through a system of distribution of rootstalks and technical assistance.

The qualities of ramie fiber make it satisfactory for many uses both alone and in mixtures. It is water adsorptive, free of lint, and has a high luster. The tensile strength is approximately four times that of flax and more than eight times that of cotton. In chemical composition, it is the same as cotton, being 90 percent pure cellulose. It is suitable for paper making, in the manufacture of tropical clothing, nets, sail cloths, military tents, cordage, surgical supplies, and for many knitted materials. As a substitute fiber, it has been used most generally in the place of silk, but is proving fairly satisfactory at the present time in mixture with jute. A more satisfactory and economical means for processing, however, is necessary before its utilization can be made general in the manufacture of burlap and bagging.

FRUITS, VEGETABLES, AND NUTS, ...

Fred A. Motz, in charge

PORTUGUESE ALMOND CROP LARGER THAN LAST YEAR

The 1944 almond crop in Portugal is estimated at about 11,600 short tons, unshelled basis, an increase of 17 percent over the 9,900 tons produced in 1943. In the Province of Algarve (southern Portugal) this year's estimated yield of 9,900 tons, unshelled basis, includes 551 tons of soft-shelled almonds. The Province of Dours accounts for the balance of the crop, or 1,700 tons. The crop in the latter Province is only about half of last season's production due to unusually heavy snow storms in northern Portugal, which damaged the almond blossoms. Almond stocks on hand are estimated at 551 short tons, shelled basis, or about 2,480 tons, unshelled basis.

MALAGA, SPAIN ALMOND CROP LARGER

A preliminary estimate places the 1944 almond crop in the Malaga district of Spain at 6,600 short tons, shelled basis. This is about 1,600 tons larger than the 1943 crop. The estimate divides the crop about equally between the Jordan and Valencia varieties. Trees blossomed heavily during the month of February and slight damage was caused by freezing weather in March. Estimates place the carry-over from the 1942 and 1943 crops as high as 16,500 tons, most of it in the shell.

MEXICAN ONIONS FOR UNITED STATES MARKET

The active demand for onions in the United States and Cuba during the past 2 or 3 years, and especially during the recent fall and winter months, has aroused considerable interest among Mexican farmers in producing onions for shipment to those countries. While total acreage and production figures for the 1943 crop are not available, indications are that production has been increasing rapidly in recent years and that a further expansion may take place during the coming season.

ONIONS: Acreage and production in specified States, 1938-1942

STATE	ACREAGE					PRODUCTION a/				
	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942
	Acres	*Acres*	*Acres*	*Acres*	*Acres*	*Sacks*	*Sacks*	*Sacks*	*Sacks*	*Sacks*
Michoacan	1,369	1,463	1,858	3,324	4,082	43.173	29,745	36.854	66,837	115.532
Jalisco ..	1,223	2,229	2,073	2,577	2,506	32,660	78,869	56,053	74,318	84,769
Guanajuato	586	786	880	1,070	1,147	22,796	19,014	21,562	29,802	60,642
Zacatecas	717	1 011	1,112	1,564	1,292	20.556	21,640	16,659	60,701	33,456
Tamaulipas	106	252	269	331	655	2,194	7 998	10,395	15,225	25,551
San Luis Potosi .	519	492	509	608	687	18,783	16,747	16,249	28,417	29,834
Morelos ..	35	86	161	148	524	1,124	1,698	3,018	6,891	24,489
Others ...	5,440	6,073	6.551	6,835	5,972	164,599	172,704	166,923	184,807	176,866
Total	9,995	12,392	13,413	16,457	16,865	305,885	348,415	327,713	466,998	551,139

Compiled from official sources. a/ In 100-pound sacks.

AUSTRALIAN DRIED FRUIT PRODUCTION ABOVE AVERAGE, CANNED LOWER

The 1943 production of dried currants, sultanas, and lexias in Australia is placed at 101,300 short tons. This is slightly smaller than the 1942 output, but it is 25 percent above the average for the 5-year period 1934-1938. Preliminary reports indicate that the 1944 pack will amount to 100,800 tons - currants 24,600, sultanas 65,000, and lexias 11,200 tons.

The 1943 pack of canned apricots, peaches, and pears aggregated 2,082,554 cases of 2 dozen 30-ounce cans. This was 42,488 cases less than the 1942 pack, and 22 percent below that of 1941. The low pack was attributed to a light peach crop and shortage of orchard and factory labor. Ample supplies of fresh fruit are available for the 1944 pack of canned apricots, peaches, and pears, but with the shortage of labor it is generally considered that actual production will be considerably below the production target of 3 million cases.

AUSTRALIA: Production of specified dried and canned fruits, 1939-1943

KIND AND STATE	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943
DRIED	*Short tons*	*Short tons*	*Short tons*	*Short tons*	*Short tons*
Currants -					
Victoria	11,200	11,100	7,500	9,600	9,700
South Australia	10,800	11,700	7,500	9,900	10,300
New South Wales	1,400	1,700	1,100	1,500	1,400
Western Australia	3,600	3,300	2,800	2,700	2,300
Total	27,000	27,800	18,900	23,700	23,700
Sultanas -					
Victoria	30,500	47,000	38,700	47,200	45,500
South Australia	10,800	13,700	12,300	13,900	12,700
New South Wales	4,600	8,300	7,000	8,400	7,700
Western Australia	400	500	300	400	400
Total	46,300	69,500	58,300	69,900	66,300
Lexias -					
Victoria	5,100	5,700	6,200	5,500	6,300
South Australia	2,300	3,200	5,100	3,800	4,300
New South Wales	400	600	600	600	600
Western Australia	500	300	200	100	100
Total	8,300	9,800	12,100	10,000	11,300
Total dried	81,600	107,100	89,300	103,600	101,300
CANNED a/	*Cases*	*Cases*	*Cases*	*Cases*	*Cases*
Apricots	282,422	397,136	288,149	181,893	215,610
Peaches	1,852,796	1,312,292	1,659,404	1,348,073	1,158,341
Pears	572,977	877,847	785,148	595,076	708,603
Total of three varieties	2,708,195	2,587,275	2,732,701	2,125,042	2,082,554
Pineapples	388,311	392,659	360,989	224,691	195,651
Total canned	3,096,506	2,979,934	3,093,690	2,349,733	2,278,205

Compiled from official sources. a/ In cases of 2 dozen 30-ounce tins.

Arthur T. Thompson, in charge

SOUTH AFRICAN MEAT CONTROL INADEQUATE 1/

The wartime meat shortage in urban centers in the Union of South Africa appears to be due primarily to the inadequacy of the Meat Control, according to a report of the Commission appointed to investigate the matter. The conclusions indicate that the Meat Control set-up was not comprehensive enough and that this, and increased consumption, rather than reduced herds and flocks was responsible for the shortage.

A number of recommendations were made by the Commission for the stabilization of the market and among them were the following:

(1) Extension of meat control to all of the larger urban centers.
(2) Fixing of prices to be paid to producers in these centers on a dressed-weight basis.
(3) Establishment of ceiling prices on meat to protect consumers.
(4) Severe penalties for infractions.
(5) Rationing of slaughterings by butchers throughout the country if necessary.

The Commission indicated that cattle numbers in the Union had not been depleted to any great extent, if at all, since the war began. Potential supplies at the beginning of 1944 were considered as satisfactory.

One of the reasons for the apparent shortage of slaughter cattle was attributed, by the committee, to an increased demand for draft oxen due to the lack of gasoline and motor trucks for general transport purposes and also to the purchase of cattle by nonfarmers for stocking farms recently acquired for investment purposes.

The withdrawal of draft cattle from the slaughter market is fairly important, as the preponderance of this type of cattle in the market under normal conditions is so great that beef from this type of animal determines to a large extent the price of all beef on the local market. Of the 12 million head of cattle reported on farms in 1939, 45 percent were owned by natives, and these were almost entirely scrub cattle.

Weather conditions, generally, have favored the cattle industry in the past 4 years. The number on hand in August 1939 was 12,060,000. A new livestock census was begun in the Union on November 15, 1943, but results will not be available for several months.

As a result of the increased demand for meat, cattle slaughter during the first 3 years of the war to the end of 1942 averaged 143,000 head annually above 1939. This increase was partly offset by imports from surrounding territory, estimated at 48,000 annually for the same years. The net increase in the slaughter of Union cattle,

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1/ See Foreign Crops and Markets, September 27, 1943, and November 15, 1943, for earlier development, in meat control in South Africa.

annually, therefore averaged only 97,000 above 1939, which is not considered an undue strain on numbers in the Union. Slaughter at the 38 principal abattoirs in the first 6 months of 1943 was 48,813 head above a year earlier.

The average increase in cattle numbers in the years 1935 to 1939 was 364,000 head annually. Since the Commission is of the opinion that there has been no depletion of cattle herds in the war years it would seen that there will be a small surplus of beef for export after the war. Exports before the war were chiefly to Italy and Belgium, in the form of frozen beef, and exports for the 5 years 1934-1939 averaged only 13 million pounds annually. Exports were discontinued at the outbreak of the war.

As a result of the Ottawa Agreement in 1932, the Union obtained a quota of 100,000 carcasses annually to be exported to the United Kingdom. As the British demand is for prime chilled beef, an export subsidy was granted by the Union Government to encourage the increased production of high grade beef. The Government decided to continue the subsidy payments for 5 years from January 1, 1939, and thereafter to decrease it annually by 20 percent.

The supply situation, as regards sheep, is somewhat different from cattle as the drought of 1940-41 affected lamb crops adversely in some important sheep-raising areas. Also high prices for slaughter sheep resulted in farmers selling even breeding ewes for slaughter. The Commission, therefore, is of the opinion that sheep numbers are below the 41 million head reported in August 1940.

CUBA EQUALIZES PRICES OF DOMESTIC AND IMPORTED PORK

Cuba has eliminated the ceiling price differential between prices for domestic and imported salt pork by Resolution 197 of the Cuban Price Regulation and Supply. Uniform wholesale and retail prices for domestic and for imported salt pork have now been established.

Wholesale ceiling prices at Habana will be 25 cents per Spanish pound (1.014 United States pounds) and the retail price will be 28 cents. Prices throughout the island will vary from the Habana base according to the cost of freight, but will not exceed an increase of more than 1.5 cents above the Habana price.

Under previous price regulations no wholesale ceilings were in effect, but the retail ceiling price was 26 cents for domestic salt pork and 28 cents for the imported product. Short supplies and increased purchasing power have made it impossible to enforce two price ceilings for the same commodity, and during the past 6 months the domestic product has sold generally at the 28-cent price.

Relatively small supplies of pork available for import and the scarcity of beef have created a need to encourage domestic hog production to the greatest possible extent. Cuban receipts of imported pork in 1943 were the smallest in recent years as a result, principally, of the shortage of meat in the United States. Last year only 1.5 million pounds were received, compared with 3.1 million pounds in 1942 and an average for the years 1938-1940 of 4.4 million pounds.

WEATHER AND CROP CONDITIONS ABROAD*

The following summarizes available reports on weather and crop conditions in specified countries during March and April, 1944.

UNITED KINGDOM Except for snowfall in some areas during the first week, March was a dry month. Cold winds and frosts the first part of March were followed by milder weather at the close. Rain was urgently needed for pastures and crops, and in eastern England and in some parts of the Midlands the shortage of water was becoming serious. Seeds were germinating slowly due to lack of moisture. By the latter part of April crops were mostly well rooted and in a healthy condition.

WESTERN EUROPE Reports received the latter part of April stated that weather and soil conditions were favorable and that the moisture supply was satisfactory. Winter crops were said to be in good condition, but spring seeding was backward in some areas.

PORTUGAL Abundant rains arrived during the first few days of March and broke the dry spell that had prevailed since the middle of January. The snowfall throughout northern Portugal in early March was the heaviest in a number of years and raised hopes of a fair yield of grains and nuts. By late April complaints of dry weather were again being received from some areas.

THE BALKANS Unusually heavy rains, which caused floods in some districts, were reported during the third week of April. Spring planting, which was already backward, was further retarded by these rains. In Bulgaria the condition of winter crops at the end of March was reported as excellent.

Cold weather prevailed in Hungary during the greater part of March. Rainfall exceeded the average in much of the country, and in 30 percent of the country was more than double the average. Due to cold weather, some meadows and pastures were backward and in some of the lower spots were under water. In the southern districts of Transdanubia and in some of the higher regions considerable areas had already been sown to wheat and other grains.

Autumn-sown crops, fruit trees, and vines stood the winter well in Rumania with very little winter-kill. By the third week of March spring plowing and sowing had begun in some counties, but in many districts the land was still too wet. On the whole, the spring is about 10 days later than last year, but more land had been autumn-plowed. Moisture reserves were ample, but warm weather was needed.

SOVIET UNION At mid-April weather conditions were favorable and the rate of spring sowing was reported as three times that of the same date last year. In parts of the Dnepropetrovsk district in the Ukraine, spring was reported as somewhat retarded, and in the Don region the weather was reported as cold and foggy, in consequence of which spring sowing was delayed.

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Press reports state that plans for construction of water reservoirs on 1,330 collective farms is being launched in the Volga area. This is the first step in a program, covering several years, for greater irrigation in arid regions. Other irrigation or drainage projects are scheduled for the Krasnoyardsk, Horky, and Moscow districts. One of the largest water reservoirs in the Soviet Union is under construction in the Chirchik river in the Charvak ravine, where a powerful hydro-electric station is to be built. The reservoir will help to regulate the operation of power stations in the Chirchik Cascade and to improve the water supply to the Tashkent Oasis.

CANADA Precipitation in the Prairie Provinces during March was fairly heavy and exceeded normal at all recording stations in Manitoba and Alberta as well as at two of the six stations in Saskatchewan. The heaviest precipitation was in the Red River Valley, and at Winnipeg 2 inches of rainfall were recorded. This was more than fell during the 4 previous months together. Most of this precipitation was in the form of snow but due to heavy run-off and evaporation was not of such great value in increasing soil moisture.

Notwithstanding this heavy precipitation in March, it was not sufficient to bring the level of fall and winter moisture up to normal at ten of the Prairie recording stations. Moisture reserves were the lowest in a number of years, and the agricultural season started with a definite shortage of soil moisture. Precipitation from September 1,to March 31, 1944, for the Prairies as a whole was only 81 percent of normal. During the two previous seasons it had been above normal.

A report from the Dominion Range Experimental Station at Mayberries, Alberta, made at the middle of March, stated that seldom in the history of the range country had the outlook for spring moisture been worse. Soil moisture reserves were said to be nonexistent over the greater part of the short grass area and the light snow cover was not sufficient to wet more than the top inch or two of soil when melted.

Good soaking rains during the next few weeks would do much to overcome this deficiency. Indications of spring were in evidence during the first half of April with mean temperatures above normal over much of the grain zone. Only moderate precipitation and light showers had fallen over most of the Prairies.

ARGENTINA A scarcity of rain during March caused corn to deteriorate somewhat in the southwestern part of the Province of Buenos Aires, the north-central sections of Cordoba and Santa Fe, and in the Pampa, but conditions elsewhere were good. Grassland was in good condition and preparations for the sowing of wheat were progressing normally. Rain was general during the first week of April, and was especially heavy in the southern part of the Province of Buenos Aires where it was most needed. Precipitation of as much as 4 inches was registered at some stations. By the last of April the weather had turned warm and dry, and more rain would have been welcome. Plowing was progressing satisfactorily.

URUGUAY The 1943-44 growing season for flaxseed, sunflower seed, and peanuts has been a relatively good one. There was no repetition of the drought, which drastically reduced the crops last year to very low levels. There have been sufficient rains this season, especially in January, when they were in fact excessive. In early March both official and trade opinions agreed that weather conditions were favorable for a good harvest.

MOROCCO Following the long drought, which began about December 20 and lasted until February 23, crops were threatened with disaster and livestock were dying from lack of water. During the last week of February, however, heavy rains fell over the whole of the Protectorate, with deep snowfalls in the Atlas mountains, thus apparently assuring sufficient water supplies for a considerable period. The rains also permitted the planting of spring crops, which had been delayed because of the impossibility of cultivating the soil.

Given an average amount of rain, crops seem assured of a good return in 1944. Between the time the rains commenced about February 23 and the end of the month, total precipitation ranged from about 2 inches at Marrakech and Agidir to 7 inches at Taza. Rainfall in eastern Morocco was much less.

BRITISH EAST AFRICA (NYASALAND) In late February, rainfall in the Southern Province had been below normal in almost all areas. The Northern Province had experienced long dry periods relieved by only a few light showers.

INDIA According to official reports, millet and wheat have been adversely affected by disease and unseasonable rains, and yields are said to be disappointing.

CANADIAN FARMERS CAN GET LOANS FROM GOVERNMENT

The Canadian Farm Loan Board, which has a branch office in every Province of Canada, was established by the Dominion Government in 1929 under Dominion legislation for the purpose of providing the farmers in Canada with a system of long-term mortgage credit at cost, according to the Dominion Department of Agriculture. As the Board is a nonprofit corporation, it provides the least expensive means of enabling a farmer to obtain the financial requirements necessary in the efficient operation of his farms.

The Board borrows money from the Canadian Government on the security of its own bonds, and reloans the money to farmers at a slightly higher rate of interest, using the spread between cost and income to pay for its administration, ascertained losses, and to set up a reserve account for possible losses.

At the present time, the Board borrows money at 3.5 percent per annum and lends it at 5 percent on first mortgage bonds. According to the latest annual report, the cost of administering the Board during the year was less than one percent of the value of assets under administration.

In addition to a first mortgage loan, the borrower may also obtain a second mortgage loan with interest at 6 percent per annum. While borrowers are expected to carry out their obligations as provided by the contract, sympathetic consideration is given by the Board to those who, through no fault of their own, by reason of crop failure, illness, or other unforeseen expenses, are unable to pay as agreed.